/41 cont./

515 782 823 [783] Fearing to defile it, the Abkhaz avoids bathing in running water; if he bathes, upon coming out /42/ of the water he takes three stones and says, "I sinned against you today; I went into the water and bathed, but you, forgive me." With this prayer, he passes the pebbles around his head with his hands and throws them into the water.

3.

The Ceremony in Honor of the Rainbow

753 [755] [782] The ceremony in honor of the rainbow, which is not obligatory for all, is performed for the greater part on persons whose sickness, according to the female fortune-teller, is caused by the rainbow. A prolonged yellowness of the face, a weakening of the organism, instability of character -- the [821] Abkhaz attributes all these to the fact that the sick person entered water at the very moment when the rainbow was drinking from it.

755 782 "Sinless" old women, having planned a sacrifice and promised a prayer, lead the sick person out to a brook; they take with them two fried capons, two stuffed loaves of unleavened bread in the shape of a tongue, and other provisions, as in the performance of the ceremony in honor of the water. On both sides of the brook, clean objects are laid out, such as clothes, silver, etc., a little bridge made of thread is thrown over the river from one bank to another. Having prepared all this, the praying-woman, with a doll that has been prepared beforehand in her hands, walks around the sick person, who is kneeling down covered with a piece of calico, and prays for him to the rainbow, known by the name Eliaphshi; then she takes a candle and addresses a similar prayer to the "Mistress Mother of the Water," and her "lord husband." After praying over the provisions she takes some [789] of each dish and throws it into the water; she places the doll in a pumpkin, and, after adorning the latter with lighted

/42 cont./

755 782 [789] candles, she lets it float down the stream, saying, "Amuse yourself with this one, instead of the sick person." Finally the old praying-woman passes her hand over the sick person's back, raises him, and having given him liberty ("azati") from his ailment, she sends him home, instructing him not to look around on his way back. The food brought to the stream is eaten on the spot by the participants in the ceremony; the remains from the table are thrown into the water and the dishes washed clean.

This prayer-ritual is considered the most sacred of all in Abkhazia, and the name of the rainbow, Atsaqva, is pronounced with great reverence. The Abkhaz claims that as [821] a consequence of this ceremony in the rainbow's honor the rain appears.

/43/

4.

782 The Prayer-Ceremony in Honor of the Wind (Phsharnha)

A large loaf of bread with cheese is prepared, placed in a basket, and carried some distance from the house. Here [776] a prayer is said to "Lady Wind" (a deity of female sex), in [824] which she is asked to bring good and to carry off evil and to [777] deliver them from all sorts of misfortunes, etc. Then the middle part of the loaf is cut out, carried into the forest, and hung on an oak tree near the top. The next day, the one who first comes near the oak tree feasts on this offering.

5.

A Prayer in Honor of a Tree

782 824 On Assumption Day, vitushki are baked according to the number of men in the family; then the master of the house, with his household, approaches any kind of young tree and, putting his foot on it, prays, "Tree, give me your blessing and happiness ... that I may safely come down

/47 cont./

782 241 [776] The Abkhaz asks of Anaphanga, the goddess of crops: "Wherever I draw my furrow and strike with iron and with implement, may an abundance of grain be granted me; grant happiness to the sower and to the consumer." During reaping, when the sheaves are first brought home, the Abkhaz prays in honor of Anaphanga; during the fast of Assumption, however, a cross is made of the ears; kernels of maize and beans are fastened to a candle to avert possible harm by evil spirits, e.g., by Dzhadzha herself. This [776] Dzhadzha is an ugly goddess, short and fat; when she comes into a field she exclaims, "Natsvis, natsvis" (little finger! little finger!), i.e., the wish that the maize in that field grow no higher than a little finger, but if one pursues Dzhadzha with the words, "Raki dzaki, raki dzaki" ("cubit-span, cubit-span"), she leaves the field and her wish does not come true.

[243] Before the threshing of the gomi /millet/ the Abkhaz pray to the great goddesses to keep the whole family in good health and to permit the whole household in future, and at the head the lady of the house herself, to gather at the beater for the threshing of the gomi (satsekhveli).

13.

A Prayer for the Bees

782 231 The Abkhaz bake a round loaf of bread with cheese, take it to the bee-garden, and pray to Ananagunda for the preservation of their bees; upon returning home, they break the loaf and eat it without looking at one another, for which some stand facing one door, some another.

14.

Prayer to the Sun and the Moon

782 821 The Abkhaz addresses the sun with the following prayer: "Sunlight, withhold not your benevolence from us, warmth

/47 cont./

782 and light, well-being and success in everything; grant
821 beauty, charm, and elegance to our maidens so that, like you, they may shine, glitter, and warm people." In the prayer to the moon, they express the wish that the children should become like it in brilliance.

/48/

15.

Prayer to Khphath and Khvnash

782 This prayer is offered on the Saturday of the week of
[796] Thomas, with cheese, bread, wine, candles, etc. brought as offerings. The aim is to solicit health and prosperity for the family. On one of the following Saturdays a similar prayer is addressed to Khvnash. Khphath and Mdzhath are
[551] men's names in Abkhazia.

16.

"Ananaha"

782 Anan means "mother." The oldest woman of the
796 household places some money on a loaf of bread (Anan l phara = money of Anan) and goes into the kitchen-garden where she places three cucumber-leaves on the loaf of bread and the same number on her own head. She then fastens a lighted candle to a cucumber stalk and, holding incense in her hands, prays, "Mothers and creators, do not let me have grief from my sons: do not cast me into sorrow because of them, but let me see them prosper." A similar prayer is said to Ashatsanha, the god-creator or god-father. A cow and money are offered in sacrifice to him. During Lent, the village maidens also used to pray to the "Mother of the Waters" that she might grant them long and thick hair.

17.

Prayer for the Ear

753 The Abkhaz says, "ahsa r lmha i klou," which means

/49 cont./

755 782 ram or a lamb, together with loaves of bread, etc. All this is taken to the place selected, and the patient himself [562] is led there. No women are present, for they are not allowed to approach this sacred place. A venerable man, holding a candle, declares, "Great god, as is proper and as the fortune-teller has prescribed, the worshiper today stands before you; he has brought sacrificial animals and loaves of bread ... Have mercy upon him, be merciful to him, if he has sinned before you, forgive him. I beg you to let him go from this day forward, to leave him and free him like a loosened knot." While saying these words, the venerable man moves the candle around the patient, lights it, and places it nearby. He then /50/ takes another candle [796] and prays to Michael-Gabriel. Upon the completion of this ceremony, the sick person returns home alone, while the others sit down to a meal.

One such ceremony, however, is not considered sufficient for the send-off of so eminent a guest as a god. The [796] Abkhaz is therefore obliged to repeat the ceremony annually. One day a week is set aside as a holiday in honor of that same supreme being; this day is considered such a sacred one that the house even remains unswept, etc.

19.

Aphi

776 [821] Aphi (2) is the god and master of the thunder, lightning,

[113] 2. See Sborn. sveden. o kavk. gortsakh, No. V, Tiflis, 1871, pp. 15-16, article "Religioznyye verovaniye abkhaztsev /Religious beliefs of the Abkhaz/," by A. -- where, by the way, this deity is called Afy.

[782] and all atmospheric phenomena in general. The most solemn prayers in Abkhazia are offered in honor of this god.

/50 cont./

1782 On the day set for the prayer, usually at the time when
733 the herds are driven into the mountains for the summer and
[796] when they return in autumn, the shepherds of the village break up into several groups, each group choosing a pretty spot in the forest near a brook or river. Some rams, according to the number of participants, are slaughtered, and the oldest shepherd of those departing for the mountains addresses Aphi, begging him to preserve them as well as their herd from the thunder-
[562] bolts. Women and children do not dare to be present at the prayers to Aphi, and women may not even pronounce his name. When talking of Aphi, the Abkhaz usually say "khakhikal" ("the one above" or "the supreme one.")

1782 During a prolonged drought, a prayer with sacrifices is
731 offered in honor of Aphi. The best bull is chosen from the
789 herd and a day is set for the sacrifice. The villagers bring gomi, bread, fresh cheese, and a jug of wine. The most venerable old man holds a rope fastened to the horns of the bull; removing his cap, he pronounces the following prayer, "Oh Aphi, master of thunder, lightning, and rain! have pity on your people. Our harvests have dried up, the grass is withered, our livestock perishes from want of feed, and therefore /51/ death from hunger threatens us. Command the rain-clouds to gather, command the thunder to peal, the lightning to flash, and send us rain to save the perishing people." The participants say "Amen," and the sacrificial animal is killed and its meat cooked. After all the dishes, made from ingredients brought with him, have been pre-
[533] pared and laid out on mats, the old man who said the prayer repeats it, and then, with the singing of a hymn in praise of Aphi, the feast begins. This hymn is called Anchva rysshva
[821] and is sung in honor of Aphi, not only at feasts, but also during thunderstorms. In the first instance, it is sung with thankfulness for the gifts that are enjoyed, in the second, to move Aphi to send good weather. During the feasts, one
1782 of the elders usually addresses a speech to those present, re-
731 minding them that all they are then enjoying comes with the
574 blessing of Aphi and suggesting that they thank him. Then

/51 cont./

782 one of those present begins to glorify the god: "Anchva
731 dukhva zlyphkha khkhaura!" "O you who descends from
574 heaven with lightning and ascend to heaven with thunder, who knows the number of the stars in heaven and of the sands at the bottom of the sea ..." etc., and he concludes the poem with the words, "akhdau." All those present, divided into two groups, repeat every line of the hymn in turn, always three times over.

782 The killing of one of the herd by lightning unfailingly
821 evokes prayer to Aphi; on the other hand, if he is not appeased by sacrifice, a repetition of his visit must be expected. The owner of the dead animal invites the inhabitants of the village, without distinction as to age or sex. On the spot where the animal was killed, a tower is built about one and a half sagene in height, so that beasts of prey cannot climb it. All those present surround the killed animal, join hands, and dance, half of them singing "Voetla" and the other half answering "Chaupar," and they raise the animal onto the tower, still singing and dancing, and leave it there as a victim for the birds of prey. Then the owner of the animal killed by lightning sacrifices a bull to Aphi, at the same time thanking him for the present visit and begging him nonetheless to spare him future visits. Various dishes are prepared from the meat of the sacrificed animal; bread, cheese, and wine are brought, and those present feast all day long at the expense of the man who suffered the loss. The day the animal was killed by lightning becomes so memorable in the family that has thus been visited by Aphi that neither the head of the family /52/ nor his children will give
[527] [931] anyone anything on the anniversary of that day, saying that they expect a visit from Aphi on that day.

[766] The same ceremony is performed when a person has been struck by lightning. During the dance around the corpse, none of the relatives of the dead man dares to weep; otherwise all the participants will be struck dead by a thunder-bolt.

/52 cont./

821 766 "Recently," writes Mr. Giorgidze in the newspaper Iveriia of 1888, "a man was being buried with laments and sobbing. At that moment two bulls grazing nearby were struck by a thunderbolt and immediately the crying and sobbing turned into dancing and singing, "Atlarchouph." The dead bulls were lifted up and placed on a tree, and the deceased was buried in a deathly silence."

The corpse of a person struck by a thunderbolt is placed in a coffin, put on a tower, and left there until nothing but his bones remain; the coffin is then taken down and buried with the normal burial ceremonies and the celebration of the funeral-banquet established by custom.

175 469 [766] [821] It was probably this custom of such placing or suspending of the corpses of those killed by Aphi that led the ancient Greco-Roman writers and the geographer Vakhushti to state that in Abkhazia and Colchis dead men were not buried, but their corpses hung in trees. These are Vakhushti's words: "Though Christians by creed, the Abkhaz do not know their religion and are therefore considered to be idolaters. And indeed, instead of burying their dead, they dress them in their best clothes and weapons, lock them in boxes, and place them in trees." Apollonius Rhodius (250-200 B.C.) wrote of Colchis, "Many grapes and willows grew there, from the tops of which corpses of the dead were suspended by chains. Even now the inhabitants of Colchis consider it a crime to burn corpses of men or even to bury them and cover them with burial mounds; they are put in undressed hides of bulls and suspended from trees far from the city. But the earth as well as the air gets its own, for the corpses of women are buried in it; such is their law" (1). The same thing is

[113] 1. Greko-Rimskiie pisateli o kavkaze /Greco-Roman authors on the Caucasus/, by Gan, I, p. 49.

attested in Variae Historiae: "The Colchi put their dead in hides, sew them up and hang them on trees" (2). Nymphodorus

[770 cont.]

755 might leave. As soon as the afflicted person is able, he himself goes to the water with a prayer-woman; there he kneels and
[782] offers up a hen to the mother of the waters, a rooster to her husband, and a candle to each of them and to her female servant (Abza 'avabzatšav = benefactress, intercessor). The woman prays and strokes the sick person on the back for "deliverance" (azati).

If someone suffers from jaundice or debility, [771] the "irreproachable" elders lead him to the river, lay his clothing, silver articles, etc. on both banks, and make a bridge of twisted yarn over the river; the prayer-woman then circles the sick person with a doll and prays to the rainbow in the name of the Eliap'ši, to the mother of the waters, and to her husband. She
[782] casts into the water pieces of the food that was brought along: roasted chickens, tongue-shaped flat cakes, etc., and she allows the doll to float downstream in a gourd with a burning candle, while she prays that the goddess amuse herself with it rather than with the sick person. Finally she gives the latter "deliverance," and he may not look back on the way home (cf. p. 924 f. [untranslated]).

231 When rinderpest struck, the Kemirkehe used to dig a
789 tunnel in a steep river-bank and in the middle of this a pit in which they fastened a black cat with a silver belt. They covered the pit with boards and earth, ignited a fire on top by rubbing two sticks together, and drove the cattle through the river and the tunnel, to the accompaniment of the priests' litany. Afterwards the cat was freed.

842 The above-mentioned threefold prayer at the water is aimed at fertility when one "leads to the water" a young woman
844 for the first time, during which an egg is thrown in, and, in the case of a woman in childbed, food for the infant.

787 The Abkhaz read signs for future events, for a favorable
[821] or unfavorable outcome for undertakings, from the stars, from the form of the moon, from meeting certain animals or human beings, and also, in the manner of the Tatars, from the cracks in a sheep's shoulder-blade that has been cast into the fire (see Vol. II, p. 325).

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Àyt'ar!" etc. The dough is kneaded from the same leaven, only when calling to the cows they exclaim *wootsw*. Shrove Saturday is dedicated to *zhwabrən*.

3. *Anəkha-nəḥwa* (*Dopu-nəkha*)

Near Adzvibzha is a little village called Dopukət, where dwell the Dopua-s who are attendants (Geo. *me-khat-ur-i*) of the "icon"—*Dopu-nəkha*, revered by all the Adzvibzhaans and Dopukətans. This "icon" is known also as *shwəjən-nəkha*, i.e. Sujuna icon, under which is meant, no doubt, St. George of Sujuna in Megrelia. This "icon" is called *zhwarăk'yə* by the wives of the Dpua-s, for the reason that the wives of Abkhasians have no right to call by name the eldest members of their husband's *gvari*, or his relations. D. I. Gulia thinks that the word *zhwarak'yə* is the same as the Georgian *zvaraki*, meaning sacrificial animal (the ancient Georgian *zuaraki* = *zovaraki*, Armenian *zovarak*).[1] In honour of this "icon" every Adzvibzhaan and Dopukətan family bakes, on the Shrove Sunday, a cake from millet flour (*sorghum*, in Geo. *ghomi*), which is offered as a gift to it. Prayers are said by the head of each family, and a handful of salt and a piece of wax candle are put aside for the "icon". The eldest of the Dopua goes round the houses and collects the salt and wax.

Mamsər Dopua told us: "At the present time our icon is in the village Sujuna."

4. *Àyt'ar-nəḥwa* (*khwazhwə-kərà*, in the Bzyb dialect *khwazhw-kərà*)

On the first Monday[2] of the Great Fast the ritual of supplication to Àyt'ar himself is observed. This supplication is otherwise called *khwazhwə-kərà* (in the Bzyb dialect *khwazhw-kərà*). *À-khwazhwə* (Bzyb. *à-khwazhw*) is a special cake, sometimes coniform, and sometimes of round flattened shape. These cakes, which may be stuffed with cheese or not, but on this occasion are lenten, are invariably included in sacrificial offerings of the Abkhasians. They may be boiled, as on this occasion, or baked. *A-kərà* denotes "to hold". After it is called, in Abkhasian, the month of February, *khwazhwəkən-mzà* (*a-mza*, month, moon). *À-khwazhwə* (Bzyb. *à-khwazhw*) denotes also rhododendron, the leaves of which are indispensable in the making of sacrificial maize-cakes.

[1] As a cult term this word is met with in the form ḫwrz in Sabaean (Chwolsohn, *Die Ssabier*, ii. 24, 37, cf. p. 191, n. 179), see N. Marr, *The Baptism of the Armenians, Georgians, Abkhasians and Alans*, etc. (in Russian), in *Zapiski* (Bulletin) of the Eastern Branch of the Imperial Russian Archæological Society, St. Pb., 1908, vol. xvi, p. 203. (*Ed. Khrist. Vost.*)

[2] The Megrelians call this Monday *t'at'ashkhe beduieri*, lucky, or happy Monday, lit. the moon-day. With the Abkhasians, too, *Ayt'ar's* day is Monday; they pray to the moon exclusively on Mondays.

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[796] sacrificial maize-cakes. Also on this day, in the early evening, are prepared from the above-mentioned leaven many *à-khwazhwə*, and three loaves, made in the shape, respectively, of the moon, the sun, [243] and *alakwara*.[1] In the latter are placed as many *aklakùt-s* (little wooden hammers, models of those used in threshing millet, or maize) as there are women in the family and an extra one symbolizing the desire for their increase. This correlation of the number of hammers [469] with the number of women in the family arose, of course, from the fact that the threshing of millet was the woman's job. Soups of phasel and of fresh nettle (*à-khwats*) are also prepared. On this day no edible [768] herb of any kind is allowed to be consumed, or used in cooking; [263] *dsdsom*, the Abkhasians say, that is, "it is not proper," "it is forbidden" (in Megrelian *vashineri*).

[512] Late in the afternoon, when the cattle have returned from the fields, the prayers begin.

(*a*) *Antswà-ĥwa* (for God).[2]

The whole family gathers together. On the threshold of the [340] house, *àishwa*, is placed a long and narrow table (in Megrelian *tabaki*), [352] on which are laid all the eatables described above. Behind this little table stands the head of the family, and behind him all the other members. The wax candles are lighted. The head of the family takes three *à-khwazhwə*, and, addressing *Antswà*, God, prays that His favours and bounties may be showered upon his family, etc. The family repeat with him, *àămen*. These cakes are put aside.

(*b*) *Àyt'ar*.

After this the head of the family takes three new *a-khwazhwə*, and says: [539] *Wa, Àyt'ar—bzhwàyt'ar! bzhyə-nə̀khak zənàp-yanà, bzhyə —tsqəmzàk zxəkədr—dsə*, etc., "*O, Àyt'ar—seven Àyt'ar, in the hands of whom are seven icons (to whom are subject seven gods), and to whom are lit seven candles,"—be thou the guardian of our herds! Multiply them so that we may milk seven men's load of milk! Let no harm come to our herd, except the old wool and old dung!* etc. The introduction, given in Abkhasian, is uttered by all, while everybody improvises the rest of the supplication as best they can, repeating the mystic number [796 80] seven every minute. As is shown by the introduction *Àyt'ar* is the head of a group of seven gods. The number seven appears in many prayers.[3]

[243] [1] *Alakwara*—a large mortar (Geo. *tchashuri*) in which millet (*ghomi*) is husked.

[193] [2] *hwa* is an abbreviated form of the word denoting "he says"; cf. the Russian *gut* heard in the existing colloquial speech.

[3] All this, and the fact that the Abkhasians up to this day still pray to the moon and the sun, makes us wonder whether the septenary *Àyt'ar* is closely connected with the Babylono-Assyrian septenary of gods, particularly as the names of the gods *An, Anu—Antsqwà*, and *Ištar—Àyt'ar*, are very similar, while the moon and the sun are included in both pleiades. [821] [171]

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[196] *ǝ-khwazhw* and entreats god *Alǝshkintr* to grant the house faithful dogs—those best friends of man and reliable watchers of his weal; the prayer at the same time spills some of the hot *a-k'warǝpǝ* or *a-*
[260] *k'warpǝ* (a thick broth of *ǝ-khwazhw*, or millet) towards the sea and some towards the mountains, uttering "*Wootsw!* Burn out the tongue
[158] of the evil-speaker, the eyes of the evil-eyed", and continues his prayer.
[116] In the opinion of the commission, *Alǝshkintr* is also "part" of *Ayt'ar*. *Ala* denotes dog; *shkintr*, however, is incomprehensible.

The commission explained that "dog" was mentioned before
[231] "man" on account of the former being more capable of loyalty to a master than the latter.

671 It should be noted that the common law values the blood of a
685 dog in proportion to that of its owner; the blood of a baron's dog is
825 equal to that of a baron, of a peasant's to that of a peasant, etc.

539 From the lips of K. Dolbaia (Abkh. Delba), an 80-year-old Abkha-
231 sian, who possesses an expert knowledge of the Abkhasian language, I wrote down the following tale:—

"In ancient times, when Abkhasia was inhabited by giants and devas (daevas), Aslan, one of the giants, would not leave the devas in peace. Once, when he was asleep, the devas crept up stealthily, bound him with silk laces, blinded and killed him, and threw him into a pit as deep as a well. On their return from their usual hunting expedition, his dogs discovered their master, but they could not pull him out of the well. They fell upon an ox-cart driver who happened to be passing by, and compelled him to rescue their master from the well and unbind him. The dogs licked Aslan for three days and three nights, and so brought him back to life and restored his sight." [1]

[82] The following superstition prevails among the Abkhasians. If someone, noticing the heavens bursting open, succeeds in uttering *Làri, vàri, khoz̀ǝ, jkhwàri*, he will have all his wishes fulfilled. Only one woman was honoured with this great good fortune, the widow of a Mukvabba. *Làri* is interpreted as *lala* which denotes dog; *vàri*
[192] (*wàri* from *aowyǝ*,* man) as man; *khoz̀ǝ* as whey; *jkhwàri* as the crust of millet porridge; uttered together they are supposed to mean "make me rich". My Abkhasian advisers repeatedly emphasized that the dog was mentioned first because of its unexampled loyalty and fidelity to man, his master.

196 (*d*) *Amza-nǝhwa*, Prayer to the Moon.
196 The supplicant takes the moon-shaped cake and says: "Thou,

[104] * See p. 122, note *. According to Marr, the throat participates vigorously in the production of this composite or diffusive sound, and in a way as if the sound of the guttural "ʕ" (the ancient Arabic '*ain*) were also heard. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

[171] [1] The Academician N. Y. Marr has kindly directed my attention to Moses of Khoren, who describes how by order of Semiramis, the dogs of *Araliz* (cf. *Alǝshkintr*) licked the corpse of *Ara* or *Arsis*, the Armenian Prince, in order to revive him.

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Àmza, the great part of the great god *Àyt'ar*, guard over our men! Grant them beauty and strength!" Simultaneously the men-folk crowd around him, for the moon is the god of men; the women-folk stand at a distance. "Increase our cattle and all our weal! Burn out the eyes of the spell-binders, and the tongues of the evil-speakers! *Wootsw, Wootsw*!" the supplicant continues his incantation and, calling to the cattle, spills *k'uarpa* (*a-k'warpà* or *a-k'wərpà*) now in the direction of the sea, now towards the mountains.

"The moon is a man, and the sun is a woman," say the Abkhasians.

I will now quote from my notes the following brief account of a very characteristic Abkhasian tale:

(1) "Seven very rich Abkhasian brothers had no sisters; whereat they were very aggrieved. Eventually, however, a sister was born, but from that moment the wealth of the brothers began to diminish; every night some invisible power drove away their cattle in herds. The youngest brother who was endowed with the gift of prescience (*ashàna*) said to the others: 'A demon has entered our house in the guise of our sister; if we do not kill him, our days and those of all in the whole district are numbered!' The brothers, however, would not listen to him. Thereupon he left his home, and travelled abroad, where he married a beautiful maiden-sun (*Àmra*). After several years, feeling home-sick, he set out to visit his brothers. Alas! what did he find? There was nobody left alive in the whole district except a mouse and his own sister-demon (the witch). She at once devoured his horse, and stepped aside to sharpen her teeth. On the advice of the mouse, the moon-brother, to save his life, took to his heels; he managed to inform his wife-sun of his misfortune, who hastened to deliver him. But the sister overtook her brother and began to devour him. By this time his wife Àmra had arrived. She pulled her husband, *Àmza*, towards her, but the demon pulled also; and so a deadlock ensued. *Anisw̱à* decided the matter thus: he allowed the wife-sun to have her husband, the moon, for fifteen days, and the demon to have him for the remaining fifteen days of the month. And from that time began the phases of the moon. As soon as the moon becomes full it means that the demon has begun to devour Àmza, on which account the moon diminishes gradually; towards the end of Àmza's life his wife, full of love, comes to the rescue of her unfortunate husband, and as her caresses and care restore him to life the moon waxes again. When it is full the demon reappears and the story repeats itself!"

(2) "The Eclipse of the Moon. During the eclipse a monster, Atv (*Àtw̱yə*), falls upon the moon to devour it. In order to save their

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539 [789] benefactor, the moon, the Abkhasians fire at the monster and thereby drive him away." [1]

(3) The Moon and the Sun. A beautiful Abkhasian widow woman had a son and a daughter, who often absented themselves from home for the whole day; they would go off early in the morning and return only late in the evening. No amount of coaxing or tenderness on the part of the mother sufficed to keep the children at home or stop them from indulging in their daily adventure, so she decided to shadow them. She found they were seated under the shadow of an ancient oak, in a thick forest, enjoying themselves in an agreeable pastime with the moon and the sun. Before them were all sorts of eatables. The mother, flying into a passion, flung fresh dung at the moon and the sun. The sun-sister, being a more fastidious creature, washed herself, but the less particular moon-brother did not do so, and hence arose the dark patches on the moon; the brother, the moon, and the sister, the sun,[2] then soared up to the sky for ever, while the widow and her children returned home."

[821] Here I will also note that the Abkhasians always welcome the new moon by looking at its reflection through a mirror, or over a silver piece.

[753] A certain mainly infantile disease, similar to convulsions, is called by the Abkhasians *ámzakra*, i.e. " to be caught by the moon ".

(*e*) *Àmra-nə̀hwa*, Prayer to the Sun.

794 [796] When he has finished the invocation addressed to Àmra (the moon), the supplicant takes the sun-shaped cake, and, with the women surrounding him, he says: " Thou, Àmra, *Àyt'ar intswakhwədà*, the great part of the great *Àyt'ar*, grant warmth, and caress the women of our family! Increase our cattle," etc., and then spills *k'warpa* (*a-k'warpà*) in the usual manner, uttering *wootsw*.

According to D. I. Gulìa, in the village of Dchilou they use the form *Amera* instead of *Àmra*.

(*f*) *Anàp'a-nàga*.

[796] After that the supplicant takes *alakwəra* (a large mortar) and, addressing himself to the god *Anàp'a-nàga*, says: " Thou, the great part of the great god *Àyt'ar*, send us the warmth of thine eyes and of

[1] Exactly what *Atèwyə* denotes is difficult to explain. In connection with the above quoted tale, the etymology of this word may, however, perhaps elucidate its significance. *Atè* denotes the barn- or screech-owl; *wy* may be the root from the word *a-owyə̀* (man); consequently *atèwyə* may denote " man-owl ". And by *atèwyə* is, perhaps, understood the sister devouring the brother-moon. [92]

[2] Their gender is often confused: sometimes the moon and the sun are sisters or brothers, sometimes the moon is brother and the sun sister.

[3] I think the Georgian word *mizezi*, cause, is derived from the Abkhasian *amaza*, cause (from *ámaa*, moon). (It is doubtful! Ed. *Khrist. Vost.*)

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4. *Abna-intswakhwə* (god of the woods)

The woods also have their "part of deity", *Abna-intswakhwə*. *Abna* denotes wood, forest; *intswakhwə* we already know. When an Abkhaz enters a forest, or if he has to pass a night there, he prays to this deity for protection. I have, however, failed to collect more information about this god of the woods.

Abna-wowyə

In ancient times the forests of Abkhasia were inhabited by *Abna-wowyə*, "forest-people." *Abna* denotes forest, and *a-wowyə*, man. They were strong and courageous, but very ugly in appearance. Their bodies were covered with bristle-like hair. From their breasts projected a strange object, shaped like an axe and strong as steel, which served as a weapon; and by pressing an enemy to their breasts they could cut him into two. They preyed incessantly upon the people, who, however, in the long run, and with God's help, destroyed them. The last of them dwelt in an impassable forest, called Urak', near the village of Adzvibzha. In the same forest there lived also the courageous Khukhw Dchit'anàà, with his herd. Between Khukhw and this "forest-man" there was intense animosity. The ugly "forest-man" would come to Khukhw's hut every midnight, and inquire: "Dchit'anàà Khukhw,[1] art thou at home?" "Yes, I am. If thou art not an old woman come and fight me," responded the fearless Abkhaz. The "forest-man", however, would never agree to a single combat. Khukhw, tired at last of these childish pranks, resorted to a ruse. Placing a log in his bed, he went outside and hid behind a bush not far from the hut. At midnight the "forest-man" came as usual, and receiving no reply, he concluded that Khukhw was soundly asleep. Entering the hut and seeing, as he thought, the sleeping form of his enemy, he was about to aim a blow at the log, when the Abkhaz, who had crept in unawares, fired a shot at him. The "forest-man", although mortally wounded, managed to crawl away, and on the following morning Khukhw followed up the blood-stained footprints, and finding the dead body of his enemy, buried him with due honours. Khukhw appropriated the wealth of the last "forest-man", and also married his beautiful wife. . . .

5. *Atswaqwa*, the rainbow

The god of the rainbow is very vindictive; he soars high in the clouds and punishes, either by death or the infliction of disease, all

[1] A peculiarity of the Abkhasian: the surname precedes the Christian name.

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who transgress against him. In order to avoid incurring the anger of this god, an Abkhaz will not draw water or wash himself when the rainbow is in the sky, and is generally careful about the use of water. Like any other god, *Ats̲waqwa* may bestow the " warmth of his eyes and his heart ", in return for offerings and prayers. Whoever is affected by his wrath, grows icteritious, emaciated, to save his life he must, at the direction of the sorceresses, make the following offering to the rainbow god :—

On one of the Thursdays [1] the old (" pure ") women take the sick person to the river, pass (Geo. *shemoavleben*) around his head 4–5 yards of variegated chintz, and pray : " The great god ! Acknowledging his transgressions this sick person (the name is mentioned) has appeared before thee, and humbly entreats thee to accept this chintz as a pledge that he will perform the established offering at the proper time, at the direction of the sorceresses ! "

On the following Thursday he is taken again to the same river and place. Usually three women say the prayer, but there may be seven. Men, with the exception of the patient, are not allowed to be present at this ceremony. The sick person is dressed entirely in white. The eldest woman [2] kills a capon and a hen ; women carry out all the duties, preparing *ash̲wamkydt'*, " *ghomi* " (millet pudding), *akwakwàr*, and *atcha-gvazàl* (Geo. *ghvezeli*, an oblong bread), of each of which there must be seven of the usual, and seven of the very small size. All these are placed on *ash̲wamkydt'*, on which also burn seven wax candles. The prayer is said by the eldest woman. The patient kneels in front of the offering ; he is taken home immediately the ceremony is over, and he must not look back. The seven small *akwakwàr*, *atcha-gvazàl*, and seven small portions of *ghomi* (*abòst'a*—millet porridge), are thrown into the water ; they represent the share of the female slaves (*ah̲t'ap'h̲wòs*) of the rainbow god. Everything else is consumed by the women themselves ; the remains being thrown into the river, for nothing must be taken home.

Muhammadans must also burn candles at this offering. The candles are fixed on a kind of hoop made of grape vine. At the end of the ceremony the hoop with the burning candles is thrown into the river.

It should be noted that in some parts of the country this god is called *Ats̲waqwa-èlia* (the Rainbow-Eliah). So at least he was called, according to the testimony of D. I. Gulia, by Javaz, the famous woman supplicant.

[1] Thursday in Megrelian is *tsashkhe*, the day of the sky. It is noteworthy that the Abkhasians perform usually on the day of the sky, the majority of rites that are seemingly connected with the sky, as in the case given.

[2] The Abkhasian women kill animals only on occasions of certain offerings.